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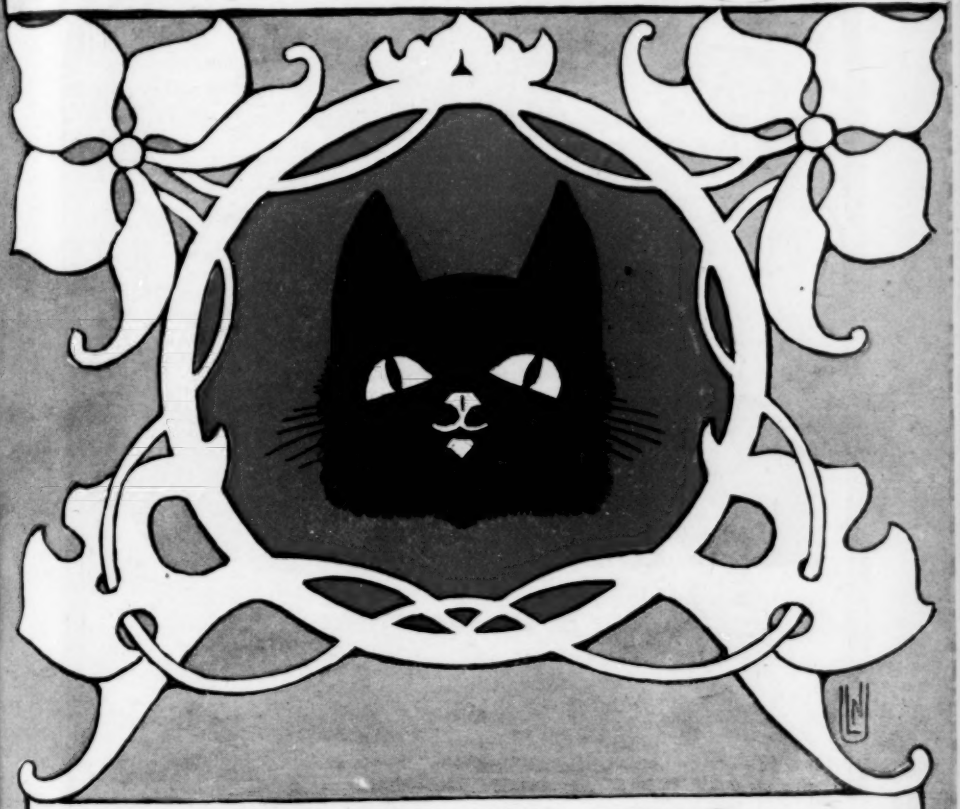
# The Black Cat



## JANUARY 1912

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## Amos Hopstone.*

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER.

THROUGH my profession of genealogist I have met many strange persons, but Amos Hopstone was the first to come to me to satisfy the cravings of an unsatisfied vengeance. The moment he mentioned his name I turned to the H drawer in my card index. "Hopstone, Amos," I read there. "The last of the Hopstones. The entire line, except Amos, killed in the famous Gibsmith-Hopstone feud," etc.

"Well, Mr. Hopstone," I said, turning to him, "what can I do for you?"

I cannot give an adequate idea of the horrid appearance of Amos Hopstone. This man who, with his own hand, had killed twenty-seven Gibsmiths bore all the marks of an unutterable villain. His coat hitched up in the back where it caught on the handles of two immense pistols, and a strange protuberance on his leg was caused by the handle of a bowie knife carried in his boot. His long mustaches drooped on either side of his mouth, and his jet black hair fell loosely from under an old slouch hat. His eyes glittered savagely.

"Maybe you can do something for me, and maybe you can't,"

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he said, harshly. "I'm Amos Hopstone, and I'm the man that killed twenty-seven Gibsmiths in twenty-six days. That's one a day and one over, but it ain't the record. Old Sime Gibsmith killed twenty-nine Hopstones in twenty-six days. That's the record, but I'd have beat it if I hadn't run out of Gibsmiths. I thought, seeing how as keeping track of folks was your business, maybe you could look me up another batch of Gibsmiths."

"No," I said. "There are no more Gibsmiths. You killed them all."

"I reckoned so," said Amos Hopstone, with a smile that was half regret and half pride. "And that ain't all. I've used up all the Jimpfers — they was cousins to the Gibsmiths. I killed sixteen Jimpfers in twenty-two days. You can file the Jimpfers away with the dodo birds — they're extinct. And I've used up all the Ranbecks — they was second cousins to the Gibsmiths. And I've used up all the Newfiggs, and all the Praddles, and all the Hilums, and all the Nypers, and all the Doublegarths. I've stripped all them branches. Not a one left. What I want you to do is to look up some more branches. If I could get on the trail of a real hearty branch — one with thirty people in it, say — I'd have a try at old Sime Gibsmith's record. I'd try to kill the whole thirty in twenty-six days. Gibsmiths and relatives of Gibsmiths is poison to me!"

I did not much like the task proposed by Amos Hopstone. I disliked the idea of furnishing genealogical records merely that old Sime Gibsmith's killing record might be beaten. I told Amos Hopstone as much.

"All right, pardner," he said, "just forget that part of it. But you look like a man who would do thorough work when he took to it as a business."

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "that is so. You are a man of discernment."

"That's right!" he declared. "I practiced discerning a long time, and I got so I could discern a Gibsmith or a Praddle as far as I could see one, and I can shoot as far as I can discern. 'Discerning an' Thorough,' — that's my motto. If I've killed off all the Gibsmiths' and all their relatives, I'm satisfied, but if I haven't I don't call it a thorough job. I want to be thorough."

He drew from his coat pocket a roll of paper and spread it on my desk.

"Here," he said, "is a list of all the Gibsmiths and all their branches as far back as the Revolutionary War, when Pete Gibsmith moved to Kaintucky. That's as far back as I can go alone. All I want you to do is to hunt up where Pete Gibsmith come from, and see if he had any sisters, and if any of them married into other families, and let me know, or if he had any brothers that — "

I stared at the name of Peter Gibsmith. After seeing that name, and the date of his birth, I would not have allowed Amos Hopstone to go to any other genealogist for anything in the world.

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "I will undertake the research, but my usual charge for work of this character — "

"Now, Mr. Wilmot," he said, "that's one thing I wanted to talk to you about. I'm out of money. And up here in New York, where nobody knows me, it is hard to get a job. I thought maybe you could recommend me to a good job. I'd turn over to you every cent of my wages every Saturday night."

For reasons which you will soon understand I did not wish Amos Hopstone to get out of my sight, and I put my hand on his arm.

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "I have the very place for you! I live in a boarding-house, but only last night my neighbor, Edgar Smith, asked me if I knew of a strong, attractive gentleman to do the work on his place. You do not object to the — ah — to the music of a cornet?"

"I can stand it," said Amos Hopstone.

"Because," I said, modestly, "I often call at Mr. Edgar Smith's home and play the cornet there."

It was thus I placed Amos Hopstone in the home of Edgar Smith. My name is Samuel Wilmot, and I became acquainted with Edgar Smith through my professional duties. He came to me, in short, to have his genealogical tree dug up, and the acquaintance ripened into friendship rapidly, particularly as there was a most charming young lady in Mr. Smith's family — his sister, Kate Smith.

Mr. Smith was delighted to secure the services of Amos Hop-

stone. There was a great deal of work to be done about his place, and he had long wished to keep a horse, but his income was such that he could not afford to keep both a man and a maid servant, and he found it would be necessary to have either a maid who would also attend to the horse, or a man who would do the housework. Amos Hopstone readily agreed to this. Vengeance, as inculcated by the feudists of Kentucky, is an overwhelming passion and drowns all lighter considerations.

Amos Hopstone went about his new duties cheerfully. Whether he was in the stable currying the horse, or in the basement washing the clothes, or in the yard cutting the grass, or in the dining-room waiting on the table, he maintained a bright, optimistic demeanor, singing cheerfully or whistling. Mr. Smith sometimes wished Amos would not whistle while waiting on the table, but, after all, it is better to have a cheerful person about the house than a sulky one. He also tried to have Amos shave off his mustaches, but the most he could persuade him to do was to curl them. When this was done and Amos donned his white apron with the nicely ruffled shoulder pieces he made a neat waiting-maid. Mr. Smith also tried to make Amos give up his pistols, because he looked strange wheeling the baby carriage with two great pistol-butts protruding from his pockets, but in this he was unsuccessful.

From time to time Amos asked me to hurry up my researches a little. He said the job I had secured for him was a good job, but it annoyed him, while currying the horse, to have to strip off his overalls, rush to the house, curl his mustache, and put on his white apron to answer the doorbell, only to find it had been rung by a pedler selling patent self-heating hair-curlers. I told him I was proceeding as rapidly as possible, and thus two years passed. At the end of every week Amos Hopstone handed me his wages as he had agreed. His afternoons off he spent calmly, cleaning his pistols and sharpening his bowie-knife.

As I have said, the Smith's home was brightened by the presence of a charming girl. She was full of life and vivacity, and an excellent performer on the mandolin, and while all the young men of the neighborhood admired her, she seemed to prefer me to any of them, because I am a cornetist in an amateur way.

We often spent an evening together playing duets. It was, therefore, no surprise to Edgar Smith to hear that I had proposed to Kate, but it was a great shock to me when Edgar Smith absolutely forbade the marriage. And yet his reason was both simple and logical. While his decision almost broke my heart I could not blame him.

Mr. Smith's mother lived on a farm in New Hampshire, and my Grandfather Wilmot lived on the adjoining farm. For many years they were such good neighbors that when the pump on my Grandfather's farm broke down he did not take the trouble to repair it. Every evening he led his cow across Grandma Smith's dooryard to a small brook that ran through her farm, and there his cow took a cool, refreshing drink of water before retiring to rest. This brook water was slightly mineral, containing a little iron and a little sulphur, which gave it a peculiar taste, and the cow became so fond of this that she would drink no other water. Her calf inherited the taste, and so did that calf's calf. Thus it became absolutely necessary for Grandfather Wilmot and his cow to make the trip to the brook every evening, and in hot weather when a cow is apt to be especially thirsty, every morning too, but Grandma Smith did not care, for a brook is not apt to be emptied by the efforts of one cow.

But all this neighborly good feeling ended suddenly. The original cow died, and her calf grew to cowhood and died, and thus cow succeeded cow for many years, but at last a calf was born that had an ungovernable temper, and this calf took a dislike to a red dress with white spots that Grandma Smith wore. Whenever Grandma Smith was in her garden this calf — now grown to be a cow — would break away from the hands of Grandpa Wilmot — who was growing feeble — and would chase Grandma Smith angrily. Several times she narrowly escaped with her life, and then she forbade Grandpa Wilmot the right of way to the brook, and thus it happened that at the very time I was pouring out my heart to Kate Smith on the cornet, and she was tremulously replying on the mandolin, Grandpa Wilmot and Grandma Smith were preparing to go to law about the cow-path.

Grandpa Wilmot contended that half a century of leading

a cow and her progeny through a yard constituted a permanent right to the cow-path, but Grandma Smith held an exactly opposite view. She therefore took her rocking-chair to her side of the hole in the fence and sat there knitting, while Grandpa Wilmot took his rocking-chair to his side of the fence and sat there reading, holding the cow by the bridle and ready to lead her to water the moment Grandma Smith moved away from the fence. When Grandma Smith was away he hastily led the cow to water and back again, and in this way the poor cow often secured enough water in one day to last for several days. Otherwise the poor cow would have died of thirst.

When Edgar Smith learned that my grandfather was acting in this manner he quite naturally refused to let me marry Kate Smith, knowing that nothing but quarrels would come of it, but we two young lovers were frightfully depressed. I spent whole days at my window, facing the Smith's home and playing mournful tunes on my cornet, and at times my sorrow caused my mouth to tremble so much that I could not lip the cornet, and my tune would die in a soul-racking wail. My Kate was so sad she could hardly nerve herself to jiggle back a tune on her mandolin. Even Amos Hopstone's callous heart was touched by my weeping cornet, and time and again he got out his pistols and aimed at me from behind a tree, but his hand trembled and he never shot at me.

The happiness of the Smith home was gone. Kate wept almost constantly, although her tears rusted her mandolin strings, and Edgar Smith was angry with both Grandfather Wilmot and myself. Even Amos Hopstone began to show ugliness. He seemed to think I should be digging up Gibsmiths instead of pouring out my sadness through the cornet. His clothes were now all in rags, and as he still gave me his wages at the end of each week he was obliged to sell his two pistols and his bowie-knife that he might buy garments.

Kate wrote many letters praying Grandma Smith to sell her farm and come to Westcote to live, but Grandma Smith absolutely refused. She said she meant to sit at the break in the fence until the case was decided in the courts, which — with the appeals — might be twenty years. At length Edgar Smith

went to New Hampshire himself, and there, although it was midwinter, he found his mother wrapped in blankets, with a red knit hood on her head, but still sitting by the gap in the fence. Every five minutes her maid brought a hot brick from the house and put it under her feet, but the time passed slowly, for she could not knit with her hands in mittens. When Edgar Smith saw it was useless to argue with her he returned to New York and sent his mother a phonograph with which to lessen the tediousness of the days by the fence. But his thoughtful kindness was wasted, for after trying the phonograph a few times Grandma Smith put it away. She found it amused Grandfather Wilmot too, while she had all the trouble of winding it and putting in new records. All he had to do was sit and listen.

"Poor Kate!" said Mrs. Edgar Smith when she heard the result of her husband's journey. "The poor child is pining away!"

"No fault of mine!" said Mr. Smith. "That young fellow's grandfather is making all the trouble!"

"That is true," said Mrs. Smith, "but Kate is so sad. She has not touched her mandolin for a week, and whenever Samuel begins to play the cornet she puts cotton in her ears."

"So do I," said Mr. Smith.

I will now make a confession. For over a year I had been concealing from Edgar Smith and Amos Hopstone the fact that I had completed my labors on the genealogy of the one and of the other. True, I hated to take Amos Hopstone's wages week after week, and I may have had no right to withhold his genealogy of the Gibsmiths, but I thought I was doing it all for the best. Now, however, I was filled with rage against Edgar Smith and all his kith and kin. If I might not be happy, and the Smiths might not be happy, Amos Hopstone should, at least, be happy.

When I rang the doorbell at Edgar Smith's house Amos Hopstone answered it. He was neatly dressed in a pair of cowhide boots, khaki trousers, blue cotton shirt-sleeves and a waitress's apron with ruffles. The improvement wrought on that rough diamond by association with one of the best families of Westcote was apparent at a glance, for on top of his neatly

brushed black hair he now wore a dainty cap with blue bows. He led me into the parlor.

"Amos Hopstone," I said, "I have good news for you. I have found the family connections of old Pete Gibsmith!"

Tears filled Amos Hopstone's eyes.

"Ah!" he cried with joy, "tell me the name, and I will exterminate it! Only whisper it in my ear and I will wipe it off the earth!"

"Smith!" I cried, watching his face. "The name is Smith!"

For a moment Amos Hopstone stared at me speechlessly. His mouth fell open so wide that I could almost see his inmost thoughts.

"Smith!" he muttered. "Smith! Why, there are thousands of Smiths! There's hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of Smiths, and only one Hopstone left!" He began to weep. "I'm scared I won't last 'til all them Smiths is killed off."

"Courage! Courage, Amos Hopstone!" I cried. "Do not let mere mass and number discourage you. With systematic methods you can accomplish wonders. Without systematic methods I should never have discovered that old Pete Gibsmith's name was, in fact, Peter Gibb Smith, or that his father, John Gibb Smith, was the common ancestor of all the Gibsmiths and of your employer, Edgar Smith."

Nothing I could have said would have so quickly made Amos Hopstone himself again. He jumped to his feet, wild with avenging anger. He tore his cap and apron off and threw them on the floor with a gesture of rage. With a rapid motion of his hand he uncurled his mustache and mussed his prim hair.

"Hah!" he cried. "And them in this here house! I ain't got no gun, but I've got an axe!"

The thought that these Smiths, who had so long thwarted my love, would soon meet their fate filled me with unholy joy, and I was about to bid Amos Hopstone do his worst, when Kate passed the parlor door. As she passed she happened to see me, and the next moment she was in my arms, calling me her Samuel and clinging to me with all the love a mandolinist can

feel for a cornetist of no mean ability. At that moment, while Amos Hopstone stood embarrassed by the sight of so much love, an awful thought came to me — Kate was, herself, a Smith! What had I done! I had doomed my one and only love to the fate of the Gibsmiths at the hand of Amos Hopstone.

"Stop, Amos Hopstone!" I cried, as he was about to dash from the room to find his axe. "Stop! Is this the patient, systematic method I advised? Would you go at your killing like a wild animal, dashing here and there, killing at random? Do not be a fool, Amos Hopstone! While you were exterminating youngish Smiths the oldest Smiths would die peacefully in their beds, escaping your avenging hand! Wait! Here is a list of all the Smiths now living east of the Mississippi and north of Mason and Dixon's line, beginning at the top of the list with the oldest living Smith. Take it! For the list I shall make no extra charge, but if you will accept the advice of a systematic man, you will begin your feud killings with the oldest Smith and proceed to kill them off in the order of their ages. Thus not a Smith will escape!"

Amos Hopstone hesitated, and I saw I had impressed him. He took the list from my hand. Luckily, Edgar Smith, his wife and my Kate were well down toward the middle of the list.

"One thing more!" I cried. "You say you have no gun. I have a gun. Let me aid you in your vengeful work by presenting you with a gun."

"Thank you!" said Amos Hopstone, with tears in his eyes.

Cruel as this offer of mine may seem, as regards the Smiths, it was not in reality so. The gun, although doubtless an excellent one in its day, was not in the best of condition. Indeed, my great-great-grandfather had discarded it just after the Revolutionary War as being too inaccurate to use. My great-grandfather used it for years as a crowbar, and my grandfather and father had used it during their lives as a stove poker, and for the four years I had been boarding my landlady's negro helper had used it to poke clinkers out of the furnace grate. It was a flint-lock musket, and I still possessed a handful of flints and the powder horn that went with the musket.

That evening Amos Hopstone called for the musket, and when

he held it in his hands he looked at it rather disappointedly, but he said he would take it. He said he guessed it would shoot further than an axe, anyway. I doubted this, but I said nothing. When Amos Hopstone left my door that night with the musket under his arm, the handful of flints in his pocket, and the powder horn slung over his shoulder, it was the last time I ever saw him.

The next day I took a copy of the list of Smiths to Edgar Smith. He received me sullenly.

"I suppose I've got to pay you for this," he said, "but this branch of the Smith family is going to the dogs, and the more ancestors it has the more ashamed of itself it ought to be. Kate is pining away, and my wife is about sick over it all, and now Amos Hopstone has gone off without so much as giving us notice!"

He seemed so depressed that I thought best not to tell him why Amos Hopstone had left. Neither did I think it an opportune time to call his attention to the fact that Grandma Smith's name stood at the very top of the list of all the Smiths. I merely mentioned that he now owed me the first payment on his genealogical tree. He immediately ordered me out of the house. His cup of trouble seemed overfull.

But the last week in January a new worry came to him. He received a letter from Grandma Smith in New Hampshire. The penmanship was cramped and uncertain because Grandma Smith had written the letter in the open air with woolen mittens on her hands.

"My dear son," it said, "I am in good health, but nervous. That old jackanapes Wilmot still sits on the other side of the fence with his cow in hand. But do not imagine I am afraid of him. I am worried about something else. About the first of this month an uncouth man with black hair and brown pants came to this neighborhood, and every day he hides behind a tree across the road and shoots. I have no idea what he is shooting at, but he is a reckless shooter. Several times a bullet has come into my yard. I am worried. He shoots all day, and the noise annoys me. I believe he is insane."

A few days later Edgar Smith received a second letter.

"My dear son," it read, "that crazy man is still here, and I am sure now he is crazy. This morning he crossed the road and rested his gun on my fence. I almost believe he is shooting in this direction. Every eight or ten shots he becomes violently insane and throws down the gun and jumps on it. It is making me nervous."

The next day another letter arrived.

> My Dear Son: — I am becoming nervous over the actions of the crazy man with the gun. To-day he climbed over the fence into my yard and hid behind an apple tree, and he has been shooting all day. At three o'clock this afternoon he shot that old jackanapes Wilmot's cow. I hoped then that he had shot what he had come to shoot, but no; he is still shooting. Can he be shooting at something in my yard?

The next day there was no letter, but the day after that there was one.

"My dear son," it said, "I am packing my trunk to-night and I shall start for Westcote to-morrow. I cannot stand this crazy man any longer. He is on my nerves. At eleven o'clock this morning that old jackanapes Wilmot was shot in the leg and was taken away to the hospital, but not before he had said he would buy my farm if I would call off the man with the gun. I accepted a first payment and we shook hands on the bargain while the man with the gun banged away at whatever it is he is shooting at. I still consider that old jackanapes an old jackanapes, however. I reserve that privilege. I am writing this in my dining-room, and the man with the gun is outside, leaning on the window sill and firing into the room. I am tempted to believe he is shooting at me. Only a minute ago when I turned to look at him he asked me, with tears in his eyes, to please sit still. The room is full of powder smoke. I begin to fear that my life is in danger."

When Edgar Smith handed me this letter his face was bright and smiling.

"Now," he said, "our troubles are at an end. You must come over this evening and bring your cornet, and we will celebrate your engagement. The wedding may be as soon as you and Kate wish, and Mrs. Smith has already decided on your wedding present."

"Forks or spoons?" I asked, merrily.

"Neither," said Mr. Smith. "We are going to give you one of those silver-plated things that look like an egg and that are used to stick in the horn end of a cornet so it will not make so much noise."

Thus Amos Hopstone brought joy to two fond souls, and happiness to a home, for had he not started out to exterminate Grandma Smith she would, no doubt, still be quarreling with Grandfather Wilmot, and Kate and I would still be parted. This proves again the value of genealogy.

A few days ago I received a letter from Amos Hopstone, written from a small town in Western Pennsylvania.

"Deer sur," it said, "I've past on to Smith number two. Number wun was bulet proof. Thare's too manny Smiths to waste bulets on bulet-proof wuns when thare so old. Lett hur die of ole age if she wants too. Yours foar vengins, Amos Hopstone."

# The Ballyhoo Girl.*

BY ALBERT M. TREYNOR.

OU'VE seen the brazen, rouge-daubed females who pose in front of side shows, while barkers scream coarse hyperbole to the crowding yokels outside the tent. They are known professionally as ballyhoo girls. The term, usually, is opprobrious; but not always, not always. Applied to Miss Madine Vance it gained a new and lovely significance.

Miss Vance was one of the four ballyhoo girls who were employed by the side show of the great Baum and Baggley circus. She was neither brazen nor rouge-daubed. Therein she differed from nearly all of the others. Afternoons and evenings she stood on the small platform in front of the lesser tent with her frazzled and haggard sisters — the centre of leering, masculine interest, a blushing picture of tortured and flinching modesty. Once I saw a delicate Corot hung in an auctioneer's shop between two vulgar, strident lithographs, and my feeling then was a muffled echo of the pang that used to clutch at my heart when I saw Miss Vance in her poor little red dress, standing beside her garish companions.

I was sort of an assistant manager and publicity man for Baum and Baggley in those days — one of the pioneer press agents, you might have called me. I'll have to answer for that, too, I suppose, when my time comes to explain about the things I have done or have failed to do.

I knew Miss Vance quite well, and I tried to be good to her. Every person with the show, from the most besotten canvasman to Madame Westphalia, the featured member of the Westphalia troupe of aerialists, of course, knew why Miss Vance was a ballyhoo girl. There are no closets with a circus, you know, and the

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skeletons have to be hung up, grinning, where every one can see.

Miss Vance had once been a highly paid aerialist — a member of the Westphalia outfit, in fact — but she had lost caste. There is nothing worse that can happen to a sawdust artist. You can see how this is true. Yet, Miss Vance loved Harvy Westphalia, the madame's eldest brother. That, perhaps, made it worse. Otherwise, she might have found courage to leave the show, even though she was born in the life and knew nothing else. I don't know. But while young Westphalia remained she patiently suffered even the hades of social ostracism. He ignored her, it is true, yet she could see him every day, and that gave her something to live for.

Miss Vance's fault had been an involuntary one. She had "lost her nerve." To a worker under the dizzy top canvas that phrase has a hideous significance. Performers should take out insurance on their nerve; but I don't suppose any company would assume the liability. Kubelick has a policy on his fingers and Gené has one on her toes. There are companies that will protect any one against the accidental loss of almost any essential function. I expect there are some that would have taken a risk on Samson's hair. But I've never heard of any insurance organization on earth that would agree to indemnify a performer for a failure of nerve. There is too much uncertainty involved.

Miss Vance's trouble came one hot evening in the mid-summer when the big top was straining to a capacity crowd. She was working over a net on the flying trapeze with the Westphalias. Young Harvy was hanging by his knees from one of the roving bars. Miss Vance had jumped for his hands, and had brought up cleverly in his muscular clasp. Twenty feet away the madame was also swinging, head downward, waiting easily and confidently for the live weight which she knew would come hurtling towards her in the next few seconds.

The music cue came, presently, just as Miss Vance was flashing towards the madame in the long, graceful curve that prefaces the double somersault through space. Young Westphalia released his hold at the critical second, but, to his horror, the girl still pulled at his arms. She was clutching at his wrists with the madness of mortal fear in her fingers. The imp of perversity that

sports with our subconscious selves had tightened her grip, you see, until it was too late to let go.

In that moment there came to Miss Vance a terrifying intuition of human fallibility. For the first time, she realized that a force, alien and inexorable, controlled her physical actions, and that the bidding of her own mind was not the supreme command. Unnerved, trembling, shaken to the principles of her being, she could only cling to the man's wrists while their oscillations grew less, and she finally dared drop to the net below, her spirit broken, her wonderful self-confidence destroyed.

The act, of course, had to be stopped. The madame was indignant. That's one of the peculiarities of a certain type of professionals. She at once saw the truth concerning Miss Vance's trouble and knew that any performer, herself included, at any moment, might be similarly attacked. Yet there was no sympathy in her manner as she slid to the net, swung to the ground, kicked into her slippers and swept off, without a word, to the dressing-room.

Harvy Westphalia felt sorry for the girl. I could see that much in the glance he gave her as he walked out of the arena with the rest of the troupe. But I could also see that, from that moment, he would look down upon Miss Vance as a member of a greatly inferior social class. The lines of caste are drawn with brutal distinctness among circus people.

If, by some supreme effort of the mind, Miss Vance had succeeded in recovering her old professional confidence, she would have been restored to her former position. But no one seemed to entertain the thought of such a possibility. Miss Vance certainly did not. She knew that she had lost the grip on herself, and to that misfortune she resigned herself without a struggle.

Hale, of the side show, offered her a job posing with the other girls; and she took it. There wasn't anything else for her to do; and suicide wasn't quite in her line.

Those must have been hard days for the girl. Side-show people have their social limitations, and ours were no better than the usual run of them. And none of the outcast performer's erstwhile companions would associate with her. So, between the side show canaille, who hated her, and the main top aristocracy,

who despised her, she was forced to lead a rather dismal life. But she was a patient little thing, with a fortitude of spirit that would do credit to the entire party socialistic. She suffered without complaining.

I used to talk with her when I had the opportunity. I think she liked me well enough, and was grateful for the friendly interest I took in her. But I could do no more than attempt to cheer her with words. Professionally she was beyond mortal assistance. In the evenings, while the wagons were being loaded, I used to stroll with her. She really had no one else to talk to.

One evening, as we were sauntering out of the lot, we happened to pass Madame Westphalia and her seven-year-old son, Teddy. They were accompanied by Harvy. When Teddy saw us he broke away from his mother and danced impudently in front of Miss Vance.

"Yah, yah! Ballyhoo girl!" he shouted.

Madame Westphalia gave no sign, but Harvy seized his nephew by the arm and quickly drew him away. For an instant I felt the girl cringe beneath the sting of the taunt. The naked soul of her had been flecked by the words of the demon child; but oh, how bravely she bore it! Almost immediately she regained her self-control, resuming towards me her light, bantering tone, as we continued our walk.

A week later we were playing to one of those record-breaking crowds that, either a kindly Providence or a capable press department, was turning out for us that year. The aerial apparatus was in place, but the act was not due for about fifteen minutes. I was just strolling into the big top when Madame Westphalia came sprinting past me like a loony woman. "My boy, my boy!" she was shrieking; and, sure enough, there was reason for the mother alarm.

Teddy, in some manner, had climbed to the madame's trapeze when no one was looking. A childish whim had caused him to unfasten the tape by which he might have descended. Directly beneath him was a pile of hurdles that had been thrown there at the end of an equestrian act. The net had not been stretched. Now, on his uncertain perch, he had become frightened, and was slipping from the bar — slipping, slipping from the bar!

The big audience was standing on the benches — just standing, staring — rigid with horror.

Then, I felt rather than heard a sharp sigh whip around the human horseshoe, like the sudden intake of a pneumatic copy tube. I saw that the concentrated gaze of the crowd had been shifted from the boy to a pair of hanging rings, some thirty feet to the right. A girl in a short, red dress had climbed to one of these rings. She was swinging — swinging in a lateral direction — in rapidly widening arcs — swinging with all the impetus her lithe body and limbs could throw into the movement — swinging until her heels dimpled the canvas top. Suddenly she shot out over the arena towards the boy's trapeze. There was a flicker of red, a fearsome creaking of ropes as the trapeze hauled taut, and the woman caught up securely on the bar with the boy. The shock threw him from his precarious resting place, but a strong, brown hand clutched the looseness of his blouse as he fell, and held him until he could be drawn up to safety.

Then — then — and the recognition of her came to me like a slap triumphant upon the back — I saw that Teddy's rescuer was Miss Vance. Ah, that was a leap! The most daring performer would never have ventured it in cold blood.

She slipped to the ground with him, and Madame Westphalia kissed and cried over them both, and became quite maudlin with emotion. Harvy kissed her, too, and escorted her from the arena.

The ballyhoo girl had regained her nerve and she won back her place on the flying trapeze.

The following week Harvy married her and twenty years later she lost her life in a railroad accident caused by the carelessness of an employee who left a switch open in the South Omaha yards.

What became of Teddy ?

He drifted into railroading when he grew up, and it was he who neglected to close the switch.

# Colonel Hornblower's Wedding Gift.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

ES, sir," said Colonel Hornblower, comfortably filling a luxurious easy-chair, and in general addressing a group of admiring friends. "My niece's wedding this morning was the greatest social event of the year. Which was only right, considering the hearts that girl has captured from the Atlantic to the Pacific. To be sure, Rosalie married a prince, but he ought to have been a king, for that girl is a born queen. Anyway, I guess the diamonds she took with her about emptied the leading jewelers' shops in this city."

"I read about it in the papers," remarked one of the group. "I remember particularly a salamander of emeralds — "

"Salamander of emeralds!" snorted the Colonel. "Well, now, that was a nice little remembrance, and I won't deny it may have cost $10,000, but you should have seen the pearl necklace I handed over. *That* was a wonder. By Golly! every pearl in that necklace was guaranteed by Stiffeny to be an A No. 1 gem. They were specially collected, brought straight from the Orient. If you want perfection in pearls, that's where you've got to send for 'em. Am I not right?"

He turned toward a little man, with a brown complexion, dark lustrous eyes, and a particularly quiet, unobtrusive manner. Perhaps the little man's diffidence, was caused by the weight of several very long names, of which the shortest and easiest on the tongue was Narandra.

"Am I not right?" repeated the Colonel.

"The Colonel is always right," yielded Narandra.

"And you saw that necklace," nodded the Colonel. "You can back me up in saying I am not overstating the case."

"Ah!" Narandra's hands went up in a gesture which em-

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phasized the light of appreciation in his eyes. "Wonderful!"

"I should say it was wonderful," acquiesced the Colonel. "That necklace, gentlemen, could not be matched, pearl for pearl, why not for fifty thousand dollars. Its equal does not exist."

Narandra shifted a little in his seat.

"Yes, sir, that was my gift to Rosalie," mused the Colonel with great satisfaction.

"Perhaps," ventured Narandra, with the suggestion of an apologetic note. "As the Colonel says, his necklace could not be matched. And yet it is a pity it was not possible to obtain even one of the pearls of Scindhia's necklace. Not among all the kings of Europe was there such a necklace. And she who last wore it was also a Queen of Hearts."

"Aye — who — what did you say about some other necklace?" demanded the Colonel, sharply.

"The famous pearl necklace which was an heirloom in the family of Maharaja Scindhia of Gwalior. Yes, that was a very fine necklace."

"You say *was*?" interrogated the Colonel. "What, then, became of it?"

"The pearls of that necklace are scattered over India," replied Narandra, "some as gifts to temples, others in hands that would not part with them — no, not for any sum of money. If the Colonel is interested I will tell how that happened.

"The Colonel will have heard of that day when the sun went down casting a blood-red glow over all the land, and the black night that followed which is called the Indian Mutiny.

"On the native side light shone on the figure of a young woman — the disinherited Queen of Jhansi. Of how she fought against her enemies, the Colonel will find set down in many writings. But when all seemed lost, she put steel into the blood of her followers, and captured the strong fortress of Gwalior from Maharaja Scindhia.

"The Colonel will please to know that was a great feat of arms even for a man, for Gwalior was richly stored with arms, treasure, and all things necessary to fight for a long time.

"From Gwalior she drove Maharaja Scindhia in such haste

to his Feringhee allies, that he left everything behind, including the famous pearl necklace of which I have spoken.

"It was in Scindhia's Hall of Audience she proclaimed herself Queen, and in token of it hung the necklace upon her own person, hailed by the voice of all the people.

"But soon the enemy came again, to marvel at her military sagacity. Then befell that which was destined. In leading a cavalry charge the young Queen of Jhansi was dealt a mortal wound. She was borne to her tent, and when it was certain her life could not be saved, she summoned all her captains into her presence. Then she broke the strings of Scindhia's necklace, and to each officer gave a pearl as a last remembrance.

"That night she died, her body was burned with great ceremony, and her ashes cast into the holy Ganges. This was done so that her enemies could not say they had captured even her mortal remains.

"But of the necklace, which then was worth a million dollars, what would be the price now? Could those pearls be gathered together, what would the jewelers ask? But that can never be, for each pearl is cherished as an order of chivalry, to be handed down from generation to generation in honor of him who received it from the hand of the dying Queen of Jhansi.

"Still, as the Colonel says, there is no doubt his gift was a very fine necklace."

* * * * * * *

**Colonel Hornblower's Auto Cloak**

"Well," ejaculated Colonel Hornblower, "maybe that necklace of Scindhia's was something out of the usual, but anyway I guess he's got nothing to equal my new fur auto cloak."

"That's a jim dandy," remarked a listener.

"Sure," nodded the Colonel. "Lined with Russian sable, and ornamented with solid gold clasps. Fifteen thousand dollars was the price the sable skins cost in St. Petersburg, and the gold clasps were not thrown in for good weight either. You've seen my cloak?" he glanced toward Narandra.

"That satisfaction will never be forgotten," replied the little man. "It is a coat fit for a *padshah*."

"Aha!" chuckled the Colonel. "I've got your Oriental nabobs beaten there!"

"And yet," reflected Narandra, "there is the *chadar,* or cloak of Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda."

"I'll bet his sables," broke in the Colonel, "don't — "

"Not sables," corrected Narandra. "His cloak is of jewels."

"Of jewels?"

This from several voices.

"Of jewels," Narandra slightly inclined his head. "The Colonel will please to understand that Gaekwar's cloak was originally made to cover the tomb of Mahomet at Mecca. But a former Gaekwar heard of it, and purchased it to cover his own shoulders instead. That cloak, sir, is of jewels of priceless gems."

The little man's eyes gleamed as its splendor was recalled to his vision.

"Well, I guess you mean," suggested the Colonel, "that the cloak is ornamented with jewels. Many of our rich women have their ball dresses trimmed with them."

For some moments Narandra maintained silence, then he spoke in a subdued tone.

"Compared with Gaekwar's cloak there is no other in existence. Nothing was ever made like it. I think its equal will never be fashioned again.

"Sir, picture to yourself that cloak, of which the entire centre is of woven pearls so closely placed together that one cannot insert the point of a pencil between the gems. When the sun shines upon that field of the ocean's treasure, it is suffused with an iridescent sheen so captivating that words fail this person's tongue.

"Then behold a border, six inches wide, all of rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds, worked into the most intricate yet harmonious arabesque design, and flashing a thousand fires in every shade of light.

"How long the makers toiled over that cloak, no man knows. From what treasure chests came the wealth of precious stones to match each other in shade and quality, cannot be said.

"But this much is certain, the former Gaekwar paid more

than five million dollars for that one garment to hang upon his shoulders, and European jewelers who have examined it believe that not for twice that sum could it now be duplicated."

Narandra paused, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, then a second idea seemed to occur to him.

"But as the Colonel says," he added, his auto cloak of sables with the gold clasps is also to be admired, being, as he remarks, worth over $15,000."

* * * * * * *

**Colonel Hornblower's Cow**

A somewhat disgruntled look had settled on the face of Colonel Hornblower.

"See here," he cried, wheeling into a position squarely in front of Narandra. "You come from what I may call a cow country. I understand the Cow in India is held in pretty high respect."

"The sacred animal — The Nourisher and Provider of the Family," replied Narandra.

"The Nourisher and Provider of the Family," Colonel Hornblower repeated the holy beast's title almost fiercely. "Well, I guess I have a cow that can do more providing and nourishing than any dozen cows in India. You've seen my prize Jersey?" he nodded to a listener.

"A beauty — a wonder," replied the other readily.

"I should say so," went on the Colonel. "That cow, sir, has turned out forty-one pounds of butter in a single week. I paid thirty thousand dollars for that cow, and if you were to lay another ten thousand on top of it, you couldn't buy her — no, sir, not that cow. She's the champion cow of the universe, and I'd like to see the holy Indian cow to beat her."

"What the Colonel says is very true," agreed Narandra. "If we value a cow by butter, then the Colonel's cow, no doubt, surpasses all the cows in India. And yet — "

Narandra paused reflectively.

"And yet what?" demanded the Colonel.

"There is the holy cow of Orissa."

"What about that holy cow?" questioned Colonel Hornblower a trifle petulantly.

"Merely," remarked Narandra, "that cow is worth a great deal of money."

"On account of some special breed?" inquired the Colonel. "I'd like to know more of that. I might decide to buy a few for my stock farm."

"I do not think the Colonel will buy a few such cows," returned Narandra gravely. "They would be too expensive."

"Expense be hanged!" ejaculated the Colonel. "When I want things — including cows — I buy 'em."

"Not such cows as that of Orissa," mildly protested Narandra. "The Colonel will perhaps pardon what I say, but even he would think twice before buying a gold cow."

"A gold cow!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Even so is that cow of Orissa. In the temple there, will the Colonel find a cow all of pure gold."

"Life size?" questioned the Colonel.

"If it please the Colonel, life size," Narandra bent his head.

"And solid?"

"Even as the Colonel's cow is of solid flesh and bone," went on Narandra. "To be sure there are cavities, for this reason. At the time of festivals the devotees wish to make offerings to the holy cow of Orissa. Therefore they feed the cow with their jewels — into the open mouth of that cow go diamond bracelets, pearl necklaces, and rings and anklets of rubies and other gems. Therefore the Colonel will understand why that cow is not one solid mass of gold. But, like the Colonel's cow, it is a great producer — very valuable to the Brahmin priests, who cherish her even as the Colonel prizes his cow. In India there are several such cows."

"What!" cried the Colonel. "Think of it! A whole herd of gold cows fed on jewels!"

"Still, as the Colonel says," returned Narandra with a deprecatory gesture, "his is also a valuable cow from the — how shall I speak? — the pointstand — yes, that is it — the pointstand of butter."

# Gold of Sheba.*

BY FLORENCE TABOR CRITCHLOW.

HEN or how I first heard of Aunt Sheba's treasure chest I have never been able to remember. It was one of those vivid traditions of childhood, so interlaced with dreams, and with the fragmentary words and deeds of those mysterious creatures, the grown-ups, that its beginnings can never be disentangled. I pictured it a massive oaken box, of huge proportions, iron-bound, and triple-locked. Why triple-locked? I do not know. I only felt that it must be so. For how else could safety be assured the seven-branched golden candlestick, "the bracelets, the earrings, the rings, the tablets, and the jewels of gold"? This inventory I caught, an intelligible morsel, from the minister's sonorous Old Testament elocution. I wondered how he knew what was in Aunt Sheba's chest. He preached once of the gold of Sheba.

She wasn't *my* Aunt Sheba. She wasn't anybody's aunt. She was the most alone person with whom I have ever been acquainted. In the whole village there was no one bound to her by kin or affection. Not only was there none who loved her; there was none for her to love, than which there is no more utter desolation possible to a heart yet human. The only creature dependent upon Sheba Dyne was a long, lean, blue cat. Now the love of a cat may compensate for much hatred of humanity. But Stella's beauty and disposition had been spoiled ever since boys, practising with amateur bow and arrows, had used her for a target Indian. They had put out the left eye, so that she seemed perpetually to wink at some esoteric joke between herself and the world. This was corroborated by the lop-sidedness of her head, due to the loss of one ear. A triangular section cut from the jawbone twisted her mouth into a satyric laugh. Sheba may have loved the cat; I

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hope, now, that she did; but the cat was a misogynist as well as a misanthrope.

It was after the death of Stella, from extreme old age, that Sheba began to pet me. From some words, vaguely overheard, at different times, dimly comprehended, and weirdly pieced together, I fancied that she wished to adopt me. I had a horrible fear that she would get me. Her presence was repulsive to me. Her skinny hands were blue, like Stella's fur. Sometimes her mouth looked crooked. I had a fantastic wish to poke my fingers into her gray hair, rolled primly down the sides of her bloodless face, to see if both her ears were there. With a horror, which no one understood, nor made allowance for, I shrank from the touch of her withered lips. There is something vampirish in the kisses of the very aged bestowed upon the very young. Sheba wasn't kissing the real me, as I kissed my mother. Through my warm flesh, she was loving the Unseen.

I lived in a distant world, through which grown-ups moved like vague, monstrous, shadowy jinn. Of all the fairy tales Aunt Sheba was the witch, the ogre, her home the enchanted house. It was the first residence and the last store on Main Street, beyond the row of bare-faced shops. From the depot to the Dyne corner, the road was open, dusty, sun-glared. Beyond stretched a long, long avenue, over which mighty white oaks and red maples, spreading like ancestral trees, cast their dappled shadows. Stores were flat on the ground and flush with the street. Residences, beyond Aunt Sheba's, stood far back, and had flower gardens in front, protected by picket fences. Mrs. Dyne's house was elevated, with a front porch; but the steps went up directly from the wooden sidewalk. There was no fence, and no room for a garden. The whole front of the house was plate glass. It was uncanny. Other people had parlors with marble centre-tables. Aunt Sheba had show-cases and a haircloth sofa. Hats hung on the wall, like decapitated heads on a city wall. It was a very mysterious house.

Aunt Sheba was, or had been, the village milliner. She had "learned the trade" in her girlhood. She continued to make and to trim precisely as she had made and trimmed forty years before. Another woman had "opened a shop" down on the busi-

ness part of Main Street. She was up to date. She brought a fashionable trimmer from the city for two weeks, each spring and fall, to introduce new ideas in hats. Only a few country people, of Mrs. Dyne's own generation, continued to trade at the obscure shop under the sign of the maples. They did not change the fashion of their hats every season. A "straw shape," with ribbons and flowers, for summer, a "frame," with velvet and feathers, or a "wing," for winter, were worn until exhausted. Mrs. Dyne was employed to turn the ribbon, to steam the velvet, to recurl the feathers, to turn up the left side one year and to roll it down the next. She was a conscientious retrimmer, who never wasted one's "own material."

My mother always went to Aunt Sheba's, "to look around, before buying elsewhere." This was not so heartless as it sounds, for she always bought of her if she found anything that "would do." My school hats, for instance, were always retrimmed there. With frightful fascination I used to revere the odd shapes and odder colors. In one corner of the show-case was a bolt of yellow ribbon, the silk a now forgotten weave, the color an anachronism. Always, so soon as we entered, I looked for that yellow ribbon. Always it was there.

Then, I wandered to the garden behind the house, invariably followed by a warning not to touch the love-apples. Nothing could have persuaded me to touch the mysterious scarlet globes, whose appearance confirmed their reputation of being "deadly poison." Some persons were even afraid to breathe their peculiar rich perfume. Their dangerous nature was so often and so firmly impressed upon me that to this day I cannot taste a tomato. I used to wonder why a deadly fruit was called a love-apple.

Once, or maybe twice, there was a little boy, named Herbert, who played with me in the back yard. I did not know exactly who he was, nor why he was there. He did not belong in the village. I never saw him elsewhere. He might, for all I knew, be a gnome, who lived in a back yard where love-apples grew. He was curious about the treasure chest. He said that everything in it would some day belong to him. His father had told him so. I did not believe it. With childhood's Ithuriel instinct, I knew that a boy like Herbert could have no title in golden candlesticks,

in Queen Vashti's chalice (wherever did I get that?), in "girdles of curious stones, jasper and onyx, beryl and chrysoprase, jacinth and sard." To be sure, Herbert said the chest was filled only with money. But I did not believe that, either. If it were so, Herbert might have it. Anybody could have money. Why should money be locked up in a mysterious chest?

Other and older persons were curious concerning the supposed hidden fortune. Every one knew that Mrs. Dyne had a mysterious chest, though I suppose no one save myself had such fantastic notions concerning its appearance and its contents. Whenever she went into the country to spend a week with some crony customer, she had the precious box loaded into the farmer's wagon, to accompany her. She expected the house to burn down sometime in her absence. They said she always had the box placed under the head of the guest bed which she occupied. What change of clothing she required she carried in a shiny leather "satchel," so, what could be in the box? She bought very little food and no clothes, so what did she do with her money, unless she put it into the box? When a prying neighbor carried the news, as the wind carries feathers, that the old woman actually ate love-apples, salted to neutralize the poison, Mrs. Dyne's reputation as a miser was fully established.

Once every year she went "back to Yorkstate"; except my father, no one knew exactly where nor why. He was the only person in the village who knew her history. He had been acquainted with her in his boyhood. He never told what he knew. Not until I was a woman grown, and many self-revealing incidents had happened, was I able to piece together these, with my father's fragmentary comments, into a patchwork biography.

Sheba Dyne had been, as she yet was, a proud and resolute woman. Her husband, desiring a wife on the St. Paul model, had tried, unsuccessfully, to reduce Sheba to a satisfactory state of meekness and submission. Her resistance gave her the reputation of a vicious temper. After enduring twelve years of unendurable despotism, Sheba had freed herself by running away. Thereupon the Law gave the child, Charlotte, to the father, a good man, and just, as the Law sees men. He had taken Charlotte, but he would not take Charlotte's kitten. For the sake of

the lost Charlotte, Sheba had cherished the forlorn Stella.

Charlotte had married early, and died years before Stella did. The boy, Herbert, was Charlotte's child. He was allowed to visit his grandmother for the sake of the reputed fortune. So my father said. I know, now, that he was right. A lean, starved story, is it not? Once a year, Sheba went to visit Charlotte's grave.

During one of these journeys, the village hotel, in which she was spending the night, caught fire, and was burned to the ground. Amateur firemen climbed to the window of her room. Resolutely, however, she refused rescue until she had seen the precious chest lowered safely to the ground ahead of her. The story of this folly got into the papers and confirmed the belief of our Pokagoners in the existence of a fortune. The shiny satchel, with her clothing, had been forgotten, and we held a bee, when she returned, to provide her with a set of suitable lingerie — though we didn't call it that.

The next year she asked the privilege of leaving her treasure in my father's care during her absence. After all, it was only an old, shabby, hair trunk, which I had often seen in her bedroom. Annually, thereafter, it came to our house for two weeks. I grew up and went to college. When I came home, each summer, it seemed to me that Aunt Sheba's hair was no thinner, her hands no bluer, her face no more wrinkled, than in my childhood. She was a very tall woman. She still walked erectly, and seemed to grow taller with the years. Her back was as stiff as her pride.

The same straw " shapes " hung on the shop wall; the yellow ribbon was in the same corner of the show-case. One summer Herbert came to visit his grandmother for a week. I liked him less than ever. He asked a great many questions concerning the probable amount of her savings. He was now of age. He might have come every summer. The old woman's greatest pleasure was the tale of Herbert's virtues. He came, as the men sent by Moses, only to spy out the land.

Now, for many years, Aunt Sheba had come from church to our house, to eat the Sunday dinner with us. She no longer tried to kiss me. One Sunday she was not at church. I went at once to the enchanted house, whose plate-glass and love-apples no longer

terrified me. She was in bed. For the first time I recognized, in weakness, her humanity. She no longer seemed an ogress. She was just a lonely, poor, helpless, old woman.

"Won't you kiss me, once — for Lottie?" she murmured. "You always looked like my little Lottie."

I bent and kissed the shrunken face as tenderly as I hope some one will sometime kiss my own distant mother. She laid her withered hand, with its wasted wedding ring, upon the little brown trunk, which stood at the head of her bed.

"All I have left — Herbert," she whispered, and died.

There was not a shred of food in the house, not a grain which a bird could have pecked at. The miser-witch had died of pride and starvation.

Herbert was summoned by telegraph. I met him at the train.

"Did she leave much property? Is there a will?" were his mournful words of greeting.

He buried his grandmother, with scarcely a decent prayer, next day. The little hair trunk disappointed him, for there was no other treasure in the house. Still, it was large enough, as he said, to hold a great deal of money. It was sent to our house, while, the very day after, the enchanted dwelling was dismantled, and everything disposed of at public auction. Herbert, himself, was auctioneer. He made a great deal of humor out of the old rubbish. I myself bought the bolt of yellow ribbon.

That evening, with the key which I had taken from Aunt Sheba's neck, we unlocked the treasure chest. We acknowledged the validity of her last words to me, as a will; but there might be some paper in the trunk, my father thought, conveying wishes which should be regarded. So he would not let Herbert take away the trunk, unopened.

The shallow tray contained a miscellaneous assortment of rubbish: a bunch of dried grass, a little muslin bag of dried rose-leaves, some colored pebbles, a chip of marble. To each article was attached a card, bearing the words, "From Charlotte's grave," and a date. Herbert impatiently shoved aside the tray. Beneath lay a collection of baby garments, all made by hand. No machine could set stitches finer and more exquisitely even. Threads had been counted for every stitch, "two under, three over." The linen

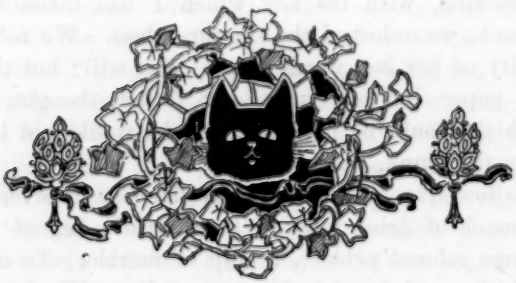
was all yellow with age, and strangely spotted, perhaps with mildew, perhaps only with tears.

For Herbert, his mother's baby linen had no interest. He held up next a frock of primrose colored silk, which might fit a child of ten or twelve years. The neck was low, the sleeves mere puffs, in the style of long ago. On a card pinned to it was written, "The last dress my Charlotte wore before she went away." Charlotte's doll was there, too, its clothes evidently made by the little mother herself. There, also, was a bit of patchwork, a rusty needle in the unfinished seam. A broken set of alphabet blocks, a torn primer, and a ragged spelling-book, a broken slate, some half-worn shoes, — these were the royal treasure of a mother's heart.

Herbert would have made a bonfire of it all, as rubbish. But, for the sake of my childhood fancies, I bought the chest of treasure.

It remained many years in the attic. Now, it stands by the head of my bed. I like to put out my hand and touch it. In it is another set of baby garments, a pair of tiny shoes, never worn, a bunch of dried violets "from Rachel's grave."

Aunt Sheba has adopted me, at last. We are kinswomen in grief.



# The Gold Jug.*

BY LEON RUTLEDGE WHIPPLE.

Y Uncle Justin Amyx had a passion for three things in this world, — racing automobiles, alcohol, and the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Yet even these simple tastes were enough to send us fleeting after death in a search for lost treasure. He hated everything else, except architecture — which was how he made his fortune. He hated his relatives most of all, so after a cynical success in the city, he withdrew to a lonely big place in Connecticut where he lived his own life with a careless certainty that I for one always admired. He filled a cellar with vintages that men talked about in whispers at the clubs; one wall of his library was lined with all the books ever written by, or about, Poe; and he had a private garage with a couple of mechanics to keep his cars tuned up so he could rush along the edge of eternity by day and by night.

That was his life. He would read and drink for hours and then go whirling through the air till his brain got cool, and come back and do it over again. Then one day an early farmer came upon my Uncle Justin Amyx, lying quietly in the gray dawn by the side of his burning car, with the blood staining a copy of "Tales of the Grotesque" in his breast-pocket. The farmer swore that the smell of alcohol was so strong that he almost got tipsy himself; and long afterwards a strange story was rumored round that my uncle had found ordinary fuel too prosaic, had stopped on the road and emptied the gasoline from his tank, and filled it with rare old whisky in one last mad endeavor to accelerate his speed. He had a certain wild humor, you'll admit.

This humor became more apparent when the will was read; in fact, I enjoyed the jest immensely. For he left the bulk of his fortune to me — a poor hack of a writer struggling along on the bare necessities. I began to acquire the luxuries at once. These

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included Cynthia; and the next summer found us writing a novel in the solitude of our new estate.

Even then the treasure would have gone undiscovered if it hadn't been for my one vice. I am lazy. And one rainy evening when we were aimlessly looking over a "Motorists' Guide to Connecticut Roads" — the only book competing with Poe for my uncle's favor — my pipe went out. The match tray was empty — at this my uncle's ghost grinned — and I turned the pages of the Guide to find a blank leaf. A sheet of heavy paper dropped out.

"This's lucky," I chuckled, twisting the sheet and sticking part of it down the lamp. The paper flamed and I held it over the pipe-bowl.

Cynthia suddenly cried — "Stop! Don't burn it!" and snatching the paper, beat out the flame.

"Look!" she whispered. "Don't you see the 'x's'"?

I gently took my wife's hand. "Do you think you have been taking enough exercise lately, my dear?"

"I'm not crazy! See them there."

Her finger rested on the charred margin of my pipe-lighter. And there a row of small brownish "x's" peeped at me.

"Hello! — those weren't there before."

I knew this because I had glanced at both sides before I twisted it. I picked up the sheet and held it near the lamp. It was thick, without water-mark, and virgin white except the burned edge. Yet as I stared, a tiny "x" began slowly to materialize in the corner nearest the lamp. I pointed to it in awed silence.

It seemed to peer mysteriously from the paper, first an almost imperceptible gray, which soon became a permanent brown. It did not resemble print, but was more like fine engraving. In a minute, two other "x's," close together, showed themselves. And as we slowly moved the paper up and down before the lamp, the surface became covered with several lines of "x's" at irregular distances apart. At one place the line was broken by the letters "amz," and just at the left edge of the burned spot were the figures 5 and 0 — the latter slightly mutilated on the right. In the bottom right corner appeared a group of seven "x's" with no space between them, then a wider space, a second group of two "x's," another space, and a third group of five "x's." At the end of an

hour we could produce no more enchanted symbols, so we spread the paper on the table and stared. This is as nearly as I can reproduce it (the blank line is where part had been burned away):

x x x x x xx x x x x xx x x x x xx x x xx x x x x
x x x x x xx x x x x xx x x x x xx x x x x xx x x x x
x x x x x x xx x x x xx x x x x x x x amz
x x x x x x x 50.....x x x x
xxxxxxx xx xxxxx

"This is some more of Uncle Justin's humor," I growled.

"It's his — it's a cryptogram! And if we can read it, we'll find the rest of his fortune. You know old man Willetts thought it ought to be lots larger!" cried Cynthia, excitedly.

"Certainly, my dear," I agreed blandly. "*If* we can read it. First class in cryptograms please stand up."

Well, that was the beginning of it. We went to bed at one o'clock with heads swirling full of x's. We counted them and found 102; we examined them again and again with infinite pains — they were all just alike, done by an expert draughtsman with invisible ink. We counted the rows up and down, across and diagonally; we divided the "x's" into groups of two's and three's, trying to make them stand for letters or numbers; we even measured the distance between them with a rule. But while the distance varied, we could make nothing of this. Apparently there was neither rhyme nor reason in the arrangement — no system, no head, no tail.

The next day likewise we spent going over and over our old steps as people do when working at a puzzle. We didn't need the money, but we hated to have Uncle Justin Amyx fool us. I tried to work at the novel, but that bit of paper would not let me. When it rained the drops danced up in a series of x's; the clock ticked x; and the stitches in Cynthia's dress looked x.

That afternoon we spent in town collecting all the books we could buy or borrow on cryptograms, hieroglyphics, codes, symbolism — even a telegraphy guide. For days we studied these in vain. We guardedly consulted friends who were good at anagrams, and even tried a system a retired gambler told me about roulette.

One night Cynthia turned to me and almost sobbed: "Let's try

to read the wretched thing till midnight, and then burn it up and be happy again. I don't believe it means anything anyhow."

"All right — done by twelve, or burn it! Get me that magnifying glass we found in his work-room, will you?" and turning to the paper which we had tightly tacked to an old drawing-board, I began my thousandth relentless examination. Cynthia returned with the lens and a bottle of Uncle Justin's most celebrated port.

While I poured a bit of wine for sharpening my wits, Cynthia peered through the glass at the paper. Abruptly she cried, "Fred — Fred — look here! Have you seen these?"

She shoved the glass in my hands and pointed at the bottom right-hand end of the first "x." Gazing at it closely I detected a microscopic pin-prick so minute as to be absolutely invisible without the glass. I hurriedly scrutinized the next x. At the bottom of *each* cross-bar was the same tiny hole. And so on with the next, and the next two. But the sixth "x" had the pin-prick at the end of the left bar only, for, as you will notice, the seventh "x" was joined to it and there was no puncture.

We continued our investigation and found that each "x" was marked with this imperceptible depression save where any two bars touched. There were none, however, in the bottom line, or in the characters *amz* or 50.

We sat and pondered. What could these tiny holes pierced with such regularity mean? I took another glass of port and thought of my Uncle's career and his hobbies. And then the whole thing flashed over me in a streak. I jumped up and cried: "Eureka, we have found it!"

She pounced upon me for the answer, but I replied calmly, "Come, let's go to bed." And not another word could she get from me. I locked the precious fragment in our jewel-safe, and we went to sleep. At least, I went — Cynthia is a woman.

Before she was awake next morning, I was off to spend the day in art-stores and machine-shops searching for my diviner's wand to help me read the cryptogram. And that evening when we went into the library I produced with a flourish that I fear has descended to me from my Uncle Justin Amyx, a pair of glittering micrometer dividers, or compasses. With Cynthia at my shoulder I began work.

Placing the needle-point of one leg of the dividers in the first pin-hole, I adjusted the screw till the other point was exactly in the next depression. I read from the scale "Twenty-seven hundredths of an inch." Cynthia noted it down.

Again I adjusted the dividers between the pricks at the right bar of the second "x" and the left bar of the third. I read thirty-seven hundredths of an inch. I repeated the operation for the next distance and found it to be twenty-six hundredths. Two more similar measurements I made and then skipped, for, as you remember, the sixth and seventh "x's" were joined. I had guessed from their appearance that this was the end of a word. Continuing thus, except for these joined letters, the combination *amz,* the figures 5 and 0, and the linked row at the bottom, I soon substituted the following numbers for the spaces between the "x's" —

27-37-26-28-36/39-34-32-33-45/29-30-26-45-33/
33-34-37-37/44-41-30-30-29/40-39-30/38-34-37-30
28-40-26-44-45/48-33-34-45-30/37-34-32-33-45/
45-33-43-30-30/31-30-30-45/28-30-39-45-30-43/
45-46-43-39/29-34-47-34-29-30-43-44/amz/
27-46-43-34-30-29/50.....40-37-29

xxxxxxx xx xxxxx
(7) (2) (5)

This, of course, is a comparatively simple cryptogram — my reading told me that. You can find the method of solution detailed in Poe's yarn of "The Gold Bug" — which, as can be seen in this story, my uncle had plagiarized mercilessly. At all events, counting the numbers, I found that the figure 30 occurred fourteen times and in juxtaposition thrice. According to the well-known rule then, 30 should stand for "e" as that is the letter found oftenest in the English language. With this hint we speedily constructed an alphabet. You observe the figures run in a series from 26 to 48; 30 is the fifth of the series; that is, it corresponds to the "e" place. Hence, 26 is "a," 27 is "b," 28 is "c," and so on.

Almost before I had finished writing down the alphabet, Cynthia, with her confounded woman's curiosity, began scribbling on a card and muttering to herself:

"Um-m, this is funny, isn't it, Fred? Begins 'Black night' . . . then 'Death Hill' . . . 'Speed one — one — one' oh yes, 'mile' . . . um-m."

And she kept her hand over the card so I couldn't see a thing even by leaning my cheek against hers. "Wait — wait, one little minute, *please!*"

Just like a woman trying to delay things at a critical moment for a foolish jest!

After about an hour she handed me the card, on which was the following mad messsage:

Black night death hill speed
one mile coast white light
three feet center turn dividers amz
buried 50.....-old
7x 2x 5x

As I read it out, Cynthia cried, "Didn't I tell you it was treasure! Look at that "-old" with the *g* for gold burned away, and the rest of the sum. Do you suppose there are three or four more ciphers across the gap? Is it $50,000 or $500,000, Fred?"

"*My* Uncle Justin Amyx was a damn fool," I replied, gently, but not at all profanely.

Cynthia giggled — a habit I cannot break her of — and answered: "Yes, I think it runs in the family. Maybe you can read it for that very reason."

I looked at her sadly — I wish my uncle had left me directions about handling a wife — and sat down on the arm of her chair.

"Well, the first of his folly is a black night, and I suppose he had a good many of them in his time. That coming first, like the date of a letter, seems to set the time of our search — nobody ever hunts treasure in daylight. And doubtless Death Hill is the place, though where the dev —"

"Shhh — it isn't! It's on the River road — François told me the other day that your uncle always swore he was going to kill himself or somebody else there, and he nicknamed it Death Hill and made it into the finest stretch in the county and even put in mile-stones so he could see how fast death could run when pushed . . . maybe it has something to do with automobiles . . ."

I sat up with a jerk. "Idiot! It *has* something to do with automobiles! 'Speed one mile coast.' What time is it? How's the weather?"

My watch said nearly eleven; I strode to the window, Cynthia staring wildly. Outside was the solemn dark of a September

night. I whispered in Cynthia's ear and we did a two-step out to the garage.

Our *mechanicien* appeared at an upper window in lavender pajamas. "François, what is the license number of the car Mr. Amyx called the 'White Angel'?"

The lavender trembled. "Oh, monsieur, have nothing then to do with that macheene, I you pray. It is not that 'White Angel' she should be called, but — Madame will pardon — the 'Black Devil.' She proceeds only at the high speed. M. Amyx had her made so. . . One cannot control her. She goes pfft! — or she stands still!"

"But, amiable, tongue-twisted Mercury, what in thunder is the number on the car?"

"That, monsieur, is seven twoo fiive."

"Ah," said I, and "Ah" echoed Cynthia.

In an hour we had that ghost-like racing-car fit for a midnight flight. It was an imported car that would go only on the high speed. To stop you threw out the clutch and skilfully used the brakes, or employed the nearest fence.

We started with a rush that caught at our hearts, and flew through the still dark following the will-o'-the-wisp our head-light made on the road. In twenty minutes we were chugging up what my uncle had sombrely christened Death Hill — though thus far no deaths had occurred there. At the thought I shivered; perhaps our wild adventure would justify the name.

At the top one of the great white mile-stones dashed past us. Beyond this was a level stretch as smooth as a billiard table. Cynthia sat very still while I devoted all my energies to keeping that possessed machine in the road. All at once I threw out the clutch and we sped on half a mile before we passed a second post. I applied the brakes and we stopped. We switched round, — the reverse worked on a low speed — and halted with the front tires exactly even with the post.

"Do you see, now?" I cried. "We speed for this measured mile, then coast as far as we can, and at the end — though I don't know what the rest of it means — will lie the treasure."

Cynthia nodded. Before us the lamp lit up a long cone of road; around us was the dense black out of which drifted the lone-

some call of a whip-poor-will. I leaned over and kissed her tenderly — I knew it was no use to ask her to let me run this risk alone. Uncle Justin Amyx's madness had seized us bitterly. I threw in the clutch and opened the throttle.

The narrow strip of road leaped toward us. The motor purred like a tiger watching for prey. The black night curtain slid by us like a dream. Faster and faster we whirled till our faces were cut and the car seemed to be making long jumps. I don't think we touched the road for twenty feet at a time. Cynthia was frozen; I clung desperately to the great wheel.

The post at the crest of Death Hill sprang at us, and with my last bit of strength, I slipped the clutch — and we dropped over. God knows how fast we were going, but I seemed to hear Uncle Justin Amyx's chuckle in the roar of the gale. The rest was a daze of paralyzed muscles on a phantom road. A silly memory of how I felt once looping the loop at a garden came to me: I got sick as at sea. With a tremendous lurch we struck the level. Our speed began slowly to fade. We were safe.

The car breathed its last moment of vitality. We stopped. For perhaps five minutes we sat stunned, listening to the hot panting of the engine. Then with a great breath I whispered: "Damn Uncle Justin Amyx!"

Cynthia pulled off her goggles and peered round.

"Look!" she cried. "The white light!" My heart leaped, for there before us was a brilliant circle of white bitten out of the darkness by our lamp. It appeared to be straight in front of us, but as the road made a sharp turn here it was really on the right. Owing to the angle at which our lamp was set the circle seemed a scant six inches from the ground.

I remembered — it was one of the monumental mile-posts my uncle had scattered through the region so touring parties could find their way through *his* country at least. They were enormous white stone things, four feet at the base and tapering like a Cleopatra's needle some eight feet high. The directions and distances were in carved black letters.

"There's the tomb-stone of the dead fortune," I shouted hilariously. "It's under it or on top of it or in it, certainly."

"Yes, my lord, and did you bring the dynamite?"

For answer I drew from under the seat a fine steel yard-stick I had brought with a vague idea of measuring three feet, and hand in hand we went forward.

"'White light three feet center turn dividers amz'" I chanted wistfully trying to balance the stick on my finger. "Got any feminine intuitions about that, fairy godmother?"

"Yes, Mad Hatter, measure the light and see if it is three feet."

"'Twill pass the time at least," I agreed. But the circle was only two feet five inches. "Guess again."

"We'll make it fit," declared my vigorous helpmate, trotting off to the car. Under her direction we shoved the crazy thing up the road a bit, remeasured and pushed a bit further. After a quarter of an hour of gasping, the circle was exactly in the middle of the post, and the yard-stick just met the arc of shadow on each side. I was catching glimpses of things now so, without orders, I made a mark at eighteen inches, the "center" referred to in the message. Then I shoved with my thumb and fiddled round trying to do something with the fool center after I had found it.

Suddenly my pencil point sank into the smooth surface of the marble. We peered at the break. A tiny round plug had sunk into the shaft.

"Bull's eye!" I yelled madly, and our heads collided sharply as we bent forward. I glared at Cynthia and her face looked pale green in the gas-light.

"'Turn dividers *amz*'" she repeated, all a-tremble. "Go on and turn them, foolish."

"Certainly," I replied, drawing the case from my pocket. "Which is 'a,' and which is 'm,' and which is 'z'?" I stuck the point in the tiny depression we had found and leered at her as I imagine my uncle would have done in similar circumstances.

"Sounds like the combination on a child's bank, doesn't it?" she inquired helpfully. "If we only knew what *was* 'a'."

Then Uncle Justin Amyx whispered his last suggestion in my ear and fled into the darkness.

"'A'" I said, solemnly, "is 26" — and in silence I adjusted the micrometer till it read 26, the cryptic symbol for the first letter of the alphabet. I inserted the point of the dividers in the depression and slowly revolved them. About three quarters round

it stopped. I pushed and a little plug gave way and sank about an eighth of an inch into the marble. I removed the tool, and a minute orifice was disclosed. Hurriedly now I set the scale at 38 — that is 'm' —and repeated the operation. Again the point caught, in a different direction, sank under my pressure, and a little hole was disclosed. Feverishly, I fixed the screw at 51; delicately I revolved the point; slowly it sank into a tiny hole, I pushed with a jerk — and hardly had time to snatch Cynthia aside before a great slab of the stone opened swiftly out upon us!

The light from our car darted into a white, tomb-like chamber. And in it reposed stolidly a two-gallon stone jug!

"The treasure!" we cried in a breath. And shameless Cynthia kissed me right on a public road.

I pulled the jug toward me. It was fairly heavy, and sealed with purple wax, imprinted with an elephant's head, the intaglio of an old ring my uncle had gotten from a blind priest in India. We closed the door, which fitted into place smoothly again, and carried the treasure to the car.

Then we went home, fearfully, throwing in the clutch while we counted five, and then throwing it out and sliding till our momentum was gone. We did not care to let the "White Angel" spread her wings any more.

The cocks were crowing for dawn when we rested the jug reverently upon the table. Cynthia scratched the seal off with a hairpin. A stout cork was disclosed. I put the corkscrew into that and gave a pull. It came out with a *plop!* as if somebody had laughed.

An exquisite heaven-born Bacchic aroma filled the room. We bent closer — never had gold smelled so sweet. I shook the jug. Something went *gluggity-glug-glug* within.

"Whisky!"

"Ah-h!"

The word I had burned away on my pipe-lighter had been "y-e-a-r-s."

# The Artful Barbers.*

BY JAMES WILLIS SAYRE.

OW Morton Nelson, the middle-aged and somewhat homely proprietor of Nelson's Barber Shop, came to acquire so young and handsome a wife is relatively unimportant. The fact that, like the fabled punkin-eating Peter, he had a wife and couldn't keep her, must, however, be set forth in some detail.

Shortly after their wedding, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson developed a mutual jealousy of outlandish proportions. In a moment of natural pride of possession, he had taken her into his barber shop and introduced her to the boys, but he instantly regretted his action. Something told him that an affinity was being nurtured before his very eyes between the handsome Mrs. Nelson and Victor Short, who, as Nelson's tonsorial first violin and concertmeister, held down the second chair from the cash register.

Victor was young, good-looking and a devil among the women. He had admitted these qualifications to Nelson during their periods of gossip on rainy days and during the dull weeks in January, while the tons of Christmas gift safety-razors were still in active use, to the detriment of the professional barber business.

Victor Short was indeed smitten with Mrs. Nelson's charms, and to induce regular visits from that fair damsel, he one day dropped to her a hint that the pretty young manicurist whom Nelson had installed in the shop looked good to the boss to a degree not justified by mere professional interest. There was no truth in the statement, but the hint was enough for the jealous Mrs. Nelson. On one pretext or another she dropped into the barber shop with greater and greater frequency, and Victor Short made amorous hay irrespective of the actions of the sun.

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Things finally came along to the point where Short obtained Mrs. Nelson's consent to getting a divorce and marrying him. A third barber overheard the plot and as he himself termed it, wised up the husband.

There was no outward trouble. Mrs. Nelson simply stopped coming to the barber shop. The next day Short received a note in her dainty handwriting. It read as follows:

> Cheer up, Victor, and don't forget me. Three months from to-day I shall come to you. Watch and wait for me. MARY.

For the next ninety-two days the boss barber and his chief assistant worked moodily side by side, each attending to his barborial knitting, and holding no other than necessary converse. Nelson's two hobbies in life had been his beautiful wife and his own patent hair-developer, which he claimed to be slowly bringing to the degree of absolute and guaranteed perfection. No one saw Mrs. Nelson any more, and her whereabouts was a complete mystery. In any event, Nelson seemed to have more time and inclination than ever for his patent hair-restorer. His experiments with it, with himself as the subject, kept him in the shop every night for hours after the regular closing-up time.

Three months to a day from the time Victor Short had received the note from Mrs. Nelson, a taxicab drove up to the curb and the chauffeur alighted and signaled to Nelson. The latter threw open the barber-shop doors with a flourish.

"You wanted my wife; now you may have her," he said to Short, simply. "Step outside."

Wonderingly, Victor Short and the other barbers followed Nelson to the curb. A fast-gathering crowd scented excitement.

"Step out, Mary," commanded Nelson, throwing open the carriage door.

Mrs. Nelson stepped out of the taxi backward. Then, bursting into a fit of hysterical weeping, she turned to the crowd, which fell back with exclamations of astonishment and horror.

A heavy beard covered the woman's face and descended to her waist line.

* * * * * * *

The city rang with the news of Morton Nelson's brutal

revenge on his lovely bride. The newspapers printed before-and-after pictures of the unfortunate woman. She herself, in column interviews, told in detail how her husband had forced her to write the note to Short and had kept her a close prisoner in their home for three whole months, daily applying to her face the powerful hair-grower, which had so fatally transformed her natural beauty into unnatural hideousness.

Some there were who justified Nelson's cruel punishment of his fickle wife. But the great majority subjected him to both public and private execration. His barbering business for a short time fell away to infinitesimal proportions. He was almost universally shunned by his former associates.

Mrs. Nelson obtained much sympathy, but little companionship. Not many persons cared for the conspicuousness which was necessarily attendant upon her society. Victor Short was the exception. He rather surprised himself and his friends by rising to hitherto unattained moral heights. He had been the cause of her misfortune, and his counsel and his society were hers during the first trying days that followed. He it was who advanced the brilliant suggestion that she obtain a court order permitting her to wear trousers instead of skirts, in order to save herself perpetual embarrassment. She looked with favor on the Dr. Mary Walker idea, and would undoubtedly have carried it into execution had not a sudden turn of events made such a course seem inadvisable.

The developments were two in number. The first was the flocking to town of the circus and vaudeville representatives. Barnum & Bailey outbid the others and duly installed Mrs. Nelson with the rest of their sideshow freaks at the comfortable salary of one thousand dollars a week.

The second was the tremendous demand which at once developed for Nelson's patent hair-grower. A whole lot of people, it became apparent, had long been looking for just such an article. Wherever the story went, wherever Mrs. Nelson traveled on her circus tour, there went the advertisement of the Nelson hair-grower. A famous multi-millionaire whose bald pate had long been the subject of newspaper jest, heard of it, sent for a dozen

bottles, grew a new head of hair, and returned to Nelson a check for ten thousand dollars and a signed testimonial. Nelson built a factory and at five dollars a bottle raked in fabulous sums.

Thus both Mr. and Mrs. Nelson went into the inevitable divorce campaign with quantities of money and the best legal talent at their command. Mrs. Nelson retained one of the biggest law firms in the country. Mr. Nelson secured a combination of legal ability and extraordinary prominence by entrusting his case to a former attorney-general of the United States. It was a terrific legal battle, and lasted until the attorneys were collectively persuaded that neither side had much money left. Then it was decided quickly.

Nelson sued for desertion. Mrs. Nelson countercharged cruel and inhuman treatment. Mrs. Nelson would probably have won, only she happened to turn her face toward the judge while he was trying to make up his mind. He gave the decree to Nelson.

* * * * * * *

Two months later the former Mrs. Nelson and Victor Short were united in marriage. Then another strange thing happened. Although Short worked at his accustomed barber chair, Mrs. Short, to all intents and purposes, disappeared from the face of the earth. From the very day of her second wedding, and for a long time thereafter, no one knew of her whereabouts. Curious callers at the Short home were informed that she had gone away. Yet it was known that she had absolutely and finally given up her circus career. Short had taken the pains to inform every one of that particular proviso in their marriage agreement.

Oddly enough, Morton Nelson displayed no animosity whatever toward Short, and had insisted upon his remaining in his old position. According to the rainy-day dope interchange between the other barbers, Nelson probably figured that his own revenge had been complete when Short married Mrs. Nelson. To be married to Mrs. Nelson was punishment enough for any man, in the eyes of her first husband. And so Short not only remained in Nelson's employ, but their relations were genuinely cordial and intimate.

Just three months to a day from the date of her second marriage, Mrs. Short walked into Nelson's Barber Shop. Short advanced toward her and proudly threw back the heavy veil which covered her features.

Morton Nelson and the other barbers gasped with astonishment. Her beard had utterly disappeared. Her face was as clear, pink and pretty as a baby's.

If the new turn of events caused chagrin or anguish to Morton Nelson, he did not show it. With amazing generosity, considering that his own bit of masterful workmanship had been so completely undone, he was the first to extend congratulations to Victor Short upon his clever handiwork.

Once more Mrs. Short flashed into striped-pole society. Once again the papers carried her story, this time with before, after and subsequent pictures. That little shaver, Victor Short, was not at all averse to telling how he had worked the miracle. He, too, was inventive. While Morton Nelson was perfecting a resistless hair-grower, Short was working upon an unconquerable hair-destroyer. This time a willing prisoner, Mrs. Short had remained in her rooms for three months, undergoing daily treatments at her second husband's hands. At the end of that period, her beard had completely disappeared and her complexion made those of ordinary beauties look like pieces of sandpaper.

Naturally, there came a tide of wealth for Victor Short. Mrs. Short's latest picture went into his newspaper advertisements everywhere. Short built a factory alongside of Nelson's hair-restorer plant and manufactured his hair-killer by the wholesale. Nelson generously gave him many valuable business pointers, and the two establishments used the same spur track for their carload shipments.

Both maintained models in the downtown store windows, demonstrating just what their marvelous preparations would accomplish. At the end of every three months they exchanged models and started in over again.

* * * * * * *

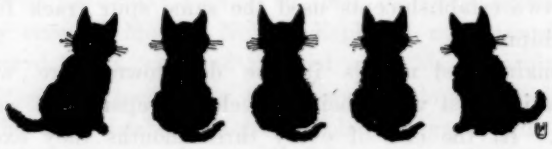
A Chicago man of wealth, leisure, looks and unrighteous pro-

clivities, spied Mrs. Short's picture in the newspapers one day and decided that he could not live without her. He moved to her fair city and soon it was all over but the divorce. One day Short came home to find his handsome spouse missing. In a little note on the dining-room table, she justified her actions by saying that Short himself had first gotten her into the habit of changing husbands. Short remarked afterward that this seemed like rubbing it in.

After a reasonable residence at Reno, Mrs. Short secured her second divorce and married the Chicago man, and they lived happily for some little time.

As for Nelson and Short, they realized that they had both the invincible force and the immovable post of the hair proposition. Nelson could grow hair on a Mexican hairless dog, while Short's preparations would remove anything that was not nailed down. Therefore they decided to go into partnership, and with the economies thus effected, they began to quietly but surely annex all the money in the United States, being indeed held responsible by some for the pronounced scarcity of money in the great financial centres.

They feel that they owe their wealth and prominence to their former wife, whose enlarged picture is conspicuously hung in their palatial main offices, and to all curious questioners they speak very highly of her.



# The Power of Tippytoes.*

BY MARY MORRISON RAYNAL.

BAILEY WELLFORD was surprised, almost chagrined by the beauty of Mrs. Accleton's library. The abundance of books, selected with discrimination, the harmony of rugs and curtains, the charm of the water-colors and bit of statuary, was something of a shock to the man who had expected to be asked into a stuffy shut-up parlor. He had left New York snow-bound and furnace-heated, he found here an open fire, also an open window through which came that mingled odor of Roman hyacinths, burning leaves, and upturned earth which had meant spring to him in his childhood.

Wellford's being again in his old home town had made this visit imperative, somehow. Yet in his coming he had hoped to find a commonplace little village woman whose personality would finally dispel that piercingly sweet memory which had haunted him through fifteen years.

Alert, keen-eyed business man of atrophied conscience though he was, this very consciousness of her nearness was filling him with a remorse and a shrinking that would have carried him from her house had she lingered a moment longer. But there was the sound of quick running feet on the stair, and Caro Accleton was greeting him with a friendliness which eased while it shamed him.

Her autumn-brown eyes met his with the old-time frankness, her autumnal hair was even more wondrously red and gold than it had gleamed in his memory. She was too fragile, her pretty color was gone, and a tiny net of lines had sketched themselves around eyes and mouth, but her beauty was far more appealing now than it had been in her radiant girlhood.

They spoke of improvements in the village and exchanged news

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of old friends as naturally as any acquaintances might, meeting after an interval of years. But the man was reliving their parting, in which he had held her crushed to his heart. The woman was tense with the memory of the sob-racked nights which had followed his desertion.

Their drifting apart had been so natural after all. During his long struggle to establish himself in the city she had slipped imperceptibly from his mind. His letters had grown briefer until they had finally ceased. That was almost to be expected. The unforgivable thing was his last letter. In response to a timid little appeal on her part, a plaintive assurance that she wouldn't mind poverty, that all she wanted was to struggle up with him, he had, in unreasoning rage, written not only of the impossibility of marriage for him, but of his change of heart.

"Seeing your impatience I honestly wish that I could feel as I did one year ago. But I don't, and I can't, and that's the end of it."

The words flamed now in his mind's eye, so brutal in their youthful crudeness that he could scarcely believe himself the author of them.

As he had said, that was the end of it. Caro had so effectually hidden the hurt in her brave little heart that those around her had not suspected it. Several years afterwards he had heard of her marriage. With womanly tact she did not now refer to her husband, or her married life. That she had money at her command was evident, whether or not she was happy was for him to find out.

As they talked he was amazed at her culture. The vision of her beauty and of her sweetness had never altogether left him, but her intellect was a fresh discovery. He had been too callow himself in those days to call out the latent possibilities in her. Her questions in regard to metropolitan affairs and the Old World, which he knew so well, were almost pathetic in their eagerness. If through books and magazines she had so kept up with modern thought and progress, how she would expand in the wider world in which he moved!

An evil thought was shaping itself in the man's mind. He would take her from this cramped life up to the city, whose

society she would adorn. He tasted in advance the pride with which he would introduce her to his friends, their envy of this pearl of a woman. Divorce was so easy in his world, so much a matter of course that no one would question his right to her. He felt no pang of pity for the man whom he would rob, the man whose honest labor was providing the luxuries of this little home in which the woman's life had blossomed.

He owed her reparation, Wellford argued. It was in his power, at last, to make up for the brutality of his youth. And after all, since they couldn't have married then, wasn't it just as well that this interval of complete separation and mutual growth had been given them? They could come together again with the freshness of new lovers, their emotions undimmed by the strain of a long engagement.

He had always loved her, so it seemed to him now. Try as he had done, he had never succeeded in wrenching her memory completely from his heart. Other women had held temporary sway, but his heart had always homed back to this, the abiding influence of his life.

She had loved him in the old days. He would again strike the love flame from those autumn-brown eyes. Of his ability to succeed Wellford had no doubt. The prosperous man of affairs who had beaten New Yorkers on their own ground, saw no chance of failure with a plastic woman.

He settled himself complacently. His talk took on a surer tone. The light of possession already gleamed in his eyes.

Suddenly he felt her attention waver. While listening apparently to him, she was alive only to an uncertain bumping sound on the outside. He was irritated by the interruption. Her pet dog probably was trying to get in, he wondered why she didn't send a servant to remove it. The door giving in, just then, a chubby child ran through the room to fling himself across her lap, muddy little feet kicking ecstatically in the air.

"I opened the door myself, Muver, so as to s'prise you. Did you hear me?"

"Of course Mother heard her precious little Tippytoes. She had been listening, and listening for him, and it seemed as though he would never come."

Swinging him around, with the ease with which a frail woman can lift a heavy child, she turned the rosy little face toward Wellford.

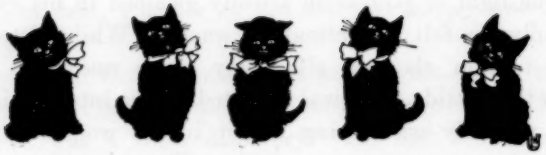
"This is my son, Billie," her voice thrilling out her pride. Her cheeks were suffused with the old, sea-shell color, from her eyes shot the love flame. So glorious was her face in its mother-love that Wellford's eyes faltered away.

"A very handsome boy," he rose as he spoke.

"You are not going?"

"I must, thank you. I'm due in New York in the morning."

As Wellford went out into the village street his heart was all one aching yearning. The sense of his loss overcame him. Snatch this woman from her home? It would be as impossible as to snatch the pale moon from the heavens. But from out his pain there seemed to arise his old lost sense of reverence for womankind. The incense from the home altar had vivified his soul. Henceforth he was to see with keener vision.



# The Wharf Dog.*

BY MILTON PRICE HARLEY.

BEYOND the end of the elevated road Delaware Avenue runs wide and bare along the old river front of Philadelphia. If you will follow it past the old fish market, past wharves piled high with freight and merchandise, past great merchantmen lying bows-in to the street, their bowsprits running high above your head, past long, low, windowless stores leaning at weird angles on their rotting foundations, you will come at length to the great twin wharves of the American Line reaching far out into the stream. Two hundred yards long and half as broad, furrowed their full length with a dozen freight tracks, they are at once the goal and starting point for gigantic tramps from ports of all the world.

It is well to take the Company's board walk skirting the river between the wharves. Here you will get a general impression of the long lines of freight cars, the clanging engines, the giant cranes lifting and swinging right or left over the cars their swaying loads of freight, depositing them in great batches convenient for loading. If you are fortunate you will see a black freighter hitched broadside to the dock, her steam derricks eating into her consignment ravenously, and probably on her off side dirty, lopsided barges rushing coal into her gaping ports. Far off across the river tall belching stacks and immense elevators rise out of a shapeless mass of factories.

Here, if you will tarry long enough, you will meet him. He will come trotting up to you, head high, ears alert, tongue hanging out one side of his mouth, eyes fixed on yours, complete self-confidence and intentness of purpose plain all over him. One sniff, and he has made your acquaintance. The powerful tail waves pleasantly. You note his short bristly yellow coat, and power-

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ful shoulders, the sharp teeth and sensitive ears, and especially you look at those wonderful eyes that scan you so intelligently. He holds still while you read the brass plate on his shabby, comfortable collar — *S. S. Bluefields,* and a thrill as of an icy finger shoots through your spinal column. For this, indeed, is the famous Wharf Dog of the American Line, whose friends range all the way from captains to stokers, and their ships encircle the globe.

In the tiny office facing down-stream from B Wharf the port steward will tell you the story, while the blue wreaths from his fresh Havanas curl about you, and the Wharf Dog sits attentively on the only rug.

"There's many a queer thing happens in a sailor's life, and those that have to do with vessels, too, such as me. I guess we get sort of hardened to it, so that we don't give much thought to occurrences that would set your kind of people to wondering and thinking and trying to explain away.

"December two years ago was the finest winter month along the coast for years. No storms at all, and fairly warm, quiet sea and light southerly breezes were the general reports. And yet, there was the *Bluefields* — "

The Wharf Dog is up at the name, great paws on the steward's lap, furiously wagging tail.

"She sailed from Havana in ballast for the port of New York — two years ago the third of last December, and no man has seen her since.

"We knew she was gone when she was a week overdue. It's that way sometimes. But never a trace of wreckage, not even a spar, and it's a well-covered course, too! Well, sir, the first week in January the *Indus* picked up a life-raft five hundred miles east of Hatteras — way out on the Bermuda trail. You know the rest, the dog was lashed fast to it, more dead than alive, starved down to a skeleton, nothing else except his collar to show who he was or where he came from — and another rope lashed to a ring, but sawed through — not cut clean, but haggled and chopped through, as by a dull knife, or a weak hand — "

The Wharf Dog is up again, this time at the window, with waving tail and raised ears. You see the wide grin and

white eye-balls of a negro looking down at him from without.

"That's Black Ben, the worse nigger on the docks, before the dog knew him."

The steward puffs strongly on the Havana apace, and then:

"There was real friendship for you — that castaway life-raft, and that haggled-through lashing — I thought just at first that maybe he had been rescued — but I didn't know the dog so well then."

The steward's face is very dim through the smoke now, but the honest eyes of the Wharf Dog are on you, and the tail slaps faintly on the rug.

"Well, sir, he was the first one down the *Indus'* gang-plank when she docked out there, and I guess he's never been very far from here since."

You smoke in silence for a few moments while the din and confusion of the wharves swells loudly on your ears. The Dog, taking a noisy drink in the large bowl in the corner, hears, too, and goes to the door, expectant eyes on the steward. You hasten to let him out while his tail slaps a "thank you" on your leg.

"In a week he knew these wharves as well as you know your own house, and every man on them. Make friends? I never saw anything like it. He had those stevedores dividing their lunch with him every day, and the meanest foreman on the docks found time for a friendly slap as he trotted by. The wharves were pretty rough in those days. The stevedores were a drunken, rowdy lot who would not stop at anything. We've had more than one murder down here and any amount of stealing, and fights that were awful to see when the crew of some freighter tackled the gang. I've put up with that sort of thing for years, fought against it, done everything I could to better the force, and never gained a single inch! But the Wharf Dog treated those fellows like brothers — trusted them, played with them, made them like and respect him. And before I knew it he had brought about the change. A few he singled out as enemies, and drove them away. They couldn't face it. He was always at them, growling and snapping, and watching them everywhere they went. The other men saw and understood, and it made them ashamed, for the first time in their lives.

"We've got the cleanest gangs on the river, to-day. I haven't seen a drunk out here for months. And I wouldn't be afraid to leave my watch where one of the boys could find it. Yes, sir, a lady could go out and watch those fellows handling freight now, if she didn't mind a little profanity.

"That's the way the Wharf Dog has always been. No one can help but like him, and somehow or other everybody is better for knowing him. He seems happy here. He's got everything a dog could want — gets ten dollars a month from the company. The manager was glad to do it when I had him down here to see the change of atmosphere, and to meet him. One thing about him that worries me sometimes, he's always looking for somebody. I don't think one man in a hundred comes here without the dog meeting him, always with that curious sort of expectant look in his eyes — and yet he never seems sad. He never forgets a man, either. And they don't often forget him! He knows every captain that ever comes here, and whole crews that I wouldn't know if they came in that door. Why I see him often up in the cab of some shifting engine, with the engineer and fireman fussing over him, or sitting quietly on the seat of some big truck over on the driveway, while the driver is off finding where his load goes. I tell you, sir, we couldn't get along without him!

"When a ship comes in he's on the gang-plank watching the crew land. He'll recognize most of them, and every last one of them has time for a pat on the head, and a word or two. And he'll look each one in the face with that expectant air, as though he was always waiting to see some one who never comes. But his tail will wag and wag all the time, and generally the captain will call him along when he comes down to report. But the captain or any one else can never coax him aboard. Beyond that gang-plank he will never stir.

"It's strange, isn't it? I'd give a good deal if he could tell his story. When I get to thinking about it, it always appears that he must be waiting for somebody. And then I remember that castaway life-raft, and that cut lashing . . . "

The smoke from the Havanas is pretty thick for a space, and you are conscious of the roar of the wharves again in the stillness of the little office.

"In the winter, when the northeasters sweep down the river the end of this wharf gets their full force. I've seen three feet of snow and hail piled up to windward of the wharf-house after a bad night. And the spray from the waves sweeping into the piling comes over our front in bucketfuls. Out there, in the cold and storm, covered with snow, and drenched with the rain and splashing, the Wharf Dog watches the gale. That's the only time his tail ever drops down, and his head, too. But he'll face the wind for hours at a time, and won't seem to hear if any one calls him."

There is a long silence in the little office, broken finally by an imperative scratch at the door. The steward lets him in, and he is certainly glad to see you both, with his waving tail and ponderous paws. Finally he sits beside you with his nose heavy on your leg, and sensitive ears that rise and sink back spasmodically. Presently the steward continues:

"Sometime ago one of the owners came down to see the *Tidewater* sail. He had some instructions for the Captain so I sent them both in here where they could talk things over without being disturbed. The dog came in with them. He's very thick with all the captains; they are always petting him and making a fuss over him. In fact, they make a point of never sailing without saying good-by to him, and he understands it and expects it just as much as they do. So I left the three of them here and went out on the wharf to watch the final preparations.

"The stevedores were trucking the last few boxes and barrels into her hold, and great streams of black smoke were flooding from her funnels. Presently she began to whistle hoarsely; in five minutes she would be off for the far port of Rio. The crew lined her rail, waving farewells to friends below. Then the Captain and the owner appeared walking briskly toward the gang-plank, talking earnestly. Suddenly they gripped hands, and the captain hurried up the gang-way. The whistle died out, the noise and confusion subsided, the thick hawsers were loosened, sailors seized the gang-plank ropes, eyes on the Captain standing at the rail beside them; the tugs began to puff and blow — "

The steward is on his feet now, chewing his dead cigar to shreds, while the Wharf Dog yawns on his rug.